

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for April 17, 2023
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about parenting teens, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

I've often heard it said that parenting is one of the hardest yet most rewarding jobs. Different ages and stages of our children's lives require an ever-adjusting skill set as parents. The balance of parents' physical and mental energy needed for toddlers and preschoolers changes as they reach school age. And then... enter the adolescent years.

The word adolescence comes from a Latin word meaning "to grow up or grow into maturity" or "to ripen". To say the teen years can be turbulent may be putting it mildly for some families. Some insight into what is happening physically, mentally, and emotionally with teenagers can equip parents with more understanding and compassion towards their maturing children.

According to Family Development Resources, not long ago it was commonly believed that children's brains were fully developed by the time they were about 6 to 7 years old. This is because the human brain is roughly 95% of its adult size by this time.

However, just because the overall brain size is not increasing does not mean that there are not changes going on within the brain. Research continues to show that adolescent brains are undergoing more changes and reshaping during this time than any other time except just after birth. This is especially true in the prefrontal cortex, which is the part of our brain responsible for using logic, making sound decisions, and evaluating risk.

Therefore, though we sometimes assume our teens will make good decisions on their own, often they do not. That part of their brain is still under construction. Sometimes they will make wise choices and sometimes their emotions will rule, and their choices will be poor. This time of parenting is more critical than ever to reinforce and encourage wise decision making.

One of the least effective ways to do this is by lecturing and even more ineffective is to take a "do as I say and not as I do" approach. Though they may sound simple, here are some of the best things we can be doing with and for our teens.

1. Spend quality time doing life together. This means things like eating dinner together, helping with homework, and going to worship services. Pay attention to what your teen enjoys and do those things with them.
 2. Be present. I highly recommend a device-free period of time in your home, preferably in the evening. Even just one hour free of phones and other screens allows for more conversation.
 3. Encourage school activities or community activities or after-school jobs. Teens are inherently self-centered. Involvement in sports or music or service or working gives teens the opportunity to look outside of themselves more and learn about people in the world around them.
- Another thing I am trying to improve is to encourage self-discovery to problem solving. I don't believe this means they have everything within themselves to reach a logical or wise conclusion. However, I do remind myself to listen more and talk less. They are not children who need constant instruction or unsolicited advice. Now they need coaching.

If a teen is overwhelmed with a problem, it can be tempting to want to remove the discomfort and immediately fix it my way. Yet this is not equipping them with coping skills to engage their brain and learn to think rather than rely on emotions. It is much more beneficial to ask questions like:

- What have you tried so far?
- Let's brainstorm some ideas. What's one thing that might work?
- What did you learn from this experience?

And now let's look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension. I will be teaching a program about Avoiding Scams this Wednesday, April 19 at 11:30 AM at the Coshocton Senior Center. Please contact the Coshocton Senior Center to register at 740-622-4852.

OSU Extension will also be offering the ServSafe® Manager Food Safety Training course on Thursdays, June 8, 15, and 22 from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., with the proctored exam Thursday, June 29. Look for registration details on our website, Coshocton.osu.edu.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!